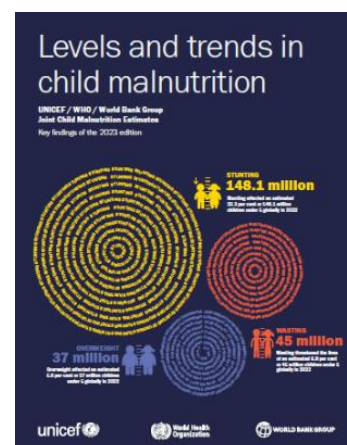




GLOBAL MEASUREMENT UPDATE

Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates 2023

GOOD NUTRITION DURING CHILDHOOD, particularly the first 1,000 days through a child's second birthday, is critical for optimal physical and cognitive development, which has lasting health and economic impacts on children, families, and their communities. It is also every child's right to receive good nutrition. Despite being preventable, malnutrition, including stunting, wasting, and overweight, continues to be a major burden preventing millions of individuals from developing to their full potential. The latest figures, known as the Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (JME), were published by the UNICEF, WHO, and World Bank inter-agency team in May 2023. The estimates reveal insufficient progress to reach the 2025 World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition targets and child nutrition portion of target 2.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹



Defining the Forms of Malnutrition*

*Some children suffer from more than one form of malnutrition—such as stunting and overweight or stunting and wasting. There are currently no joint global or regional estimates for these combined conditions.



Adapted from the
Joint Child Malnutrition
Estimates 2023

STUNTING



148 million children too short for their age

Children affected by stunting can suffer severe irreversible physical and cognitive damage that accompanies stunted growth. The devastating consequences of stunting can last a lifetime and even affect the next generation.

WASTING



45 million children too thin for their height

Wasting is the result of recent rapid weight loss or the failure to gain weight. A child who is moderately or severely wasted has an increased risk of death, but treatment is possible.

OVERWEIGHT



37 million children too heavy for their height

This form of malnutrition results when energy intakes from food and beverages exceed children's energy requirements. Overweight increases the risk of diet-related noncommunicable diseases later in life.

WHAT ARE THE JOINT CHILD MALNUTRITION ESTIMATES?

There are four main forms of malnutrition: stunting, wasting, severe wasting, and overweight (definitions and related consequences shown above). The 2023 edition of the JME prevalence estimates for these forms of malnutrition are generated using national data sources containing information on child malnutrition—specifically, data on the height, weight, and age of children under five. Household surveys are the primary data source e.g., Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART) surveys, and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS). For stunting and overweight, the estimates include global, regional, and country trends from 2000–2022. For wasting and severe wasting, the estimates include global trends for 2000–2022, regional estimates for 2022, and national estimates based on available primary data sources (e.g., household surveys).

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE JOINT CHILD MALNUTRITION ESTIMATES?

Key Features

- [Interactive dashboard](#) that visually allows users to review trends, compare regional prevalence, and progress toward the Global Nutrition Targets for 2030.
- [Downloadable](#) data, including the estimates and trends, and databases containing national country values with disaggregation by place of residence, geographic location, age, and sex.

Malnutrition is preventable; and yet the global stunting targets will not be met at current rates of progress and good nutrition is under growing threat.¹ The 2023 edition of the JME describes the magnitude and patterns of malnutrition, allowing for tracking global, regional, and national progress towards the SDG target. The resource includes an interactive dashboard and downloadable files to support data use for decision-making at global, regional, national, and subnational levels (see Key Features box). The 2023 report describes data limitations and gaps with suggestions for how to work with limited data on wasting.

WHO SHOULD USE THE ESTIMATES AND HOW CAN THEY BE USED?

- **POLICY MAKERS AND PROGRAM MANAGERS** can use the 2023 JME child malnutrition estimates to map the progress and gaps and to monitor progress towards related targets. Alongside local data, these estimates can help to prioritize resources and target geographies and populations.
- **ADVOCATES** can use the estimates to raise the visibility of malnutrition, push for access to quality programming to prevent and treat malnutrition, particularly wasting, and call for better data.
- **DONORS** can use the estimates to identify where to prioritize future investments, including where to invest in more robust data systems.
- **ALL ACTORS**, including global, regional, and national child health and nutrition experts such as those working on MOMENTUM awards, can use these estimates to
 - Determine the burden of child malnutrition and monitor progress over time;
 - Identify countries and regions that require the most support; and
 - Understand the data sources and availability within their contexts.

More Information

- thousanddays.org/updates/unpacking-the-joint-child-malnutrition-estimates-2023-edition
- State of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: data.unicef.org/resources/sofi-2023
- Lancet 2021 Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition Progress: [2021 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition Progress](#)

Reference

- 1 UNICEF, WHO, World Bank. Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates: Key findings of the 2023 edition. New York: UNICEF and WHO; 2023. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/jme-report-2023/> (report, data, and interactive dashboard)

UNICEF contributed to the development of this factsheet.

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